

# Helping Youth Succeed

**Utah State**  
UNIVERSITY  
EXTENSION

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## SUPPORT

*"The more love, support and adult contacts a young person has, the more likely it is that he or she will grow up healthy."*  
Peter L. Benson, Ph.D., What Kids Need to Succeed

*Research has shown that youth with strong support from family, relatives, teachers and other adults are more likely to become involved in wholesome activities, and less likely to end up in trouble. This newsletter discusses different types of support for youth, and offers suggestions for parents, schools, communities and congregations as they work to **help youth succeed**.*



Youth, like all of us, need to know that they are loved and valued. Families will be strengthened as members work to develop greater amounts of love for one another, and communicate their love through words and actions.

**✓ PARENTS:** Express your love to your youth by telling them how grateful you are that they are a part of the family. Show an interest in their after-school activities such as sporting events and concerts. Be sure to praise their efforts and celebrate their successes!

**✓ SCHOOLS:** Routinely work with youth and parents to make school work enjoyable. Be available for conferences. Send parents a note praising a recent achievement or accomplishment of their youth.

**✓ CONGREGATIONS:** Get to know youth and their families through activities which involve the entire family.

### **✓ COMMUNITY LEADERS/**

**NEIGHBORS:** Be friendly to youth and speak in a kind tone of voice. A smile, a joke or a good laugh can help brighten their day! Community leaders can sponsor activities that support parents, like daycare, clubs and/or family events.



One of the most valuable resources youth can have is a strong relationship with their parents. Frequent in-depth conversations between parents and youth will help create and maintain a close relationship. Listening to youth is a great way to give them support.

**✓ PARENTS:** Take time for a walk or a hike and talk with your youth -- make talking with your youth a high priority, being careful to listen closely. Note: if you are not in the habit of talking with your youth, you may feel awkward at first, but don't give up! Practice makes it easier.

**✓ SCHOOLS:** Listen carefully to students, looking beyond the words to identify the feelings that accompany the words. Don't criticize comments, even when you disagree with what the youth says. Keep the conversation as positive as possible.

**✓ CONGREGATIONS:** As youth leaders, be available when youth need you -- this requires being observant, as youth may not tell you when your time, support, or counsel is needed. Sponsor a workshop giving parents tips on how to improve communication with their youth.

Teens need adults other than parents that they can use as resources of support, wisdom, information and encouragement. Developing friendships with caring adults will help youth realize that there are many people, in addition to their parents, who are concerned for them and want them to be happy.



**✓ PARENTS:** Plan activities with trusted friends or neighbors, taking an interest in their children and encouraging them to do the same with yours. Find ways to involve your youth in local clubs, teams or other groups -- encourage their participation and volunteer to help with club events or programs. Get to know your youth's friends.



**✓ SCHOOLS:** Encourage all school staff to get to know youth outside the classroom setting. Have a time set aside each week in which students can come in and talk to you as they wish. You may pull aside a student and just say, in a friendly tone, "Hey, come talk to me in my open hour today if you get a chance."

**✓ CONGREGATIONS:** Involve youth in the planning of congregational activities, such as fund-raisers or special events. Make special assignments to adults to work with and take an interest in youth as they serve together on committees.

❑ **COMMUNITY LEADERS/NEIGHBORS:** Support after-school programs where youth can interact with adult volunteers in a positive setting. Recognize the efforts of adult leaders of youth organizations by hosting awards programs or other special events.



Youth need and benefit from neighbors who care and support them. If youth feel that they live in neighborhoods where they are supported in doing what's right, they will be more likely to make good choices.



❑ **PARENTS:** Get to know your neighbors! Match your youth's interests with others in your neighborhood who have similar hobbies. Take your youth along as you provide service for elderly neighbors such as raking leaves, shoveling snow, etc. -- this will help youth develop friendships with other adults in the neighborhood.

❑ **SCHOOLS:** Volunteer to serve on advisory boards of community youth organizations. Be aware of community issues which affect youth and be an advocate for youth in decisions which affect them. If staff live near any of the students, encourage them to make themselves available outside of school to talk.

❑ **CONGREGATIONS:** Value youth contributions in the neighborhood with an award ceremony or recognition. Plan service projects in the neighborhood, like recycling, pickup, or clean-up days.

❑ **COMMUNITIES:** Learn the names of the youth in your neighborhood! Take an interest in them and be ready to offer a listening ear if needed. Community leaders might publicly recognize neighborhoods that are family-friendly.



CARING  
SCHOOLS

A positive school climate can help youth develop skills which will be helpful later on in life. We need to make our schools a place where youth can focus on learning and growing to the best of their ability without worrying about problems like safety and security.

❑ **PARENTS:** Talk with your children about school safety. Ask what you can do to make them feel more safe and happy in school. Get involved in school activities so you can judge the school climate for yourself, and suggest ways to make it more caring and friendly.

❑ **SCHOOLS:** Teachers should look for opportunities to offer sincere compliments to students. Take time to get to know students better -- ask about their interests, their hobbies, their dreams and aspirations. Hold class meetings, and involve the youth in decisions that affect them.

❑ **CONGREGATIONS:** Organize service projects that benefit local schools. For example, congregation members (including youth) can volunteer to pull weeds, paint curbs, or pick up trash at their neighborhood school.

❑ **COMMUNITIES:** Community businesses, as well as local government organizations, can join with schools in educational partnerships such as sharing their professional expertise with students, sponsoring special events, and providing volunteers to help with school projects.



Parents can make a difference in their teen's school work just by being involved with their school and by paying attention to what the youth studies. Research has shown that as parent involvement increases, so does academic success.

PARENT  
INVOLVEMENT IN  
SCHOOLS

❑ **PARENTS:** Take a moment and have youth share something they learned at school. Talk to your youth's teachers throughout the school year and whenever possible, volunteer to help with classroom or school events. Provide your student with a quiet place to study and ask about homework assignments on a daily basis.

❑ **SCHOOLS:** Distribute a weekly or monthly newsletter so that parents stay informed -- schools may even be able to have students do the publishing. Invite parental participation on homework assignments.

❑ **CONGREGATIONS:** Recognize parents' involvement in school activities. Be mindful to schedule activities so that they do not conflict with school activities that involve the parents.

❑ **COMMUNITIES:** Businesses can lead in volunteer efforts, offering time off for employees who wish to volunteer at their children's school. Community and congregation leaders should utilize the schools' calendar as they plan and schedule activities throughout the year so that parents can be free to attend their children's activities.

✂️CLIP AND SAVE✂️

#### Parents' To-Do List

1. Be my child's biggest fan!
2. Listen to my youth without interrupting.
3. Eat at least 1 meal together every day.
4. Give my kids more hugs and praise. (Don't assume that they know how much I love them - tell them!)
5. Spend time with each of my children individually.
6. Make time for fun!

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Additional information about implementing the Developmental Assets can be obtained from:

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